



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

No. 15-95

Contact: Katie Marquette, Press Secretary – (907) 269-7447
Aileen Cole, Deputy Press Secretary – (907) 269-7458

Governor Walker To Sign Alaska Safe Children's Act into Law

July 9, 2015 ANCHORAGE – Governor Bill Walker will sign HB 44, the Alaska Safe Children's Act, into law at 6:00 pm today during a bill signing at the Alaska Flag Day celebration hosted by Alaska Child and Family in Anchorage. The bill, which is a combination of "Erin's Law" and "Bree's Law," provides child sexual assault and teen dating violence prevention curriculum to elementary schools and high schools across Alaska.

Governor Walker has long been an advocate of this legislation, and encouraged lawmakers to make it a priority during his State of the State address in January. After HB 44 failed to pass during the regular legislative session, Governor Walker included the bill on his special session proclamation.

"It is gratifying to finally be able to sign this important piece of legislation into law," said Governor Walker. "Alaska has the unfortunate distinction of having some of the highest rates of child sex abuse in the nation. Now we can arm the most vulnerable among us with knowledge so they can speak up about abuse. This bill is good for Alaska's children, and good for Alaska."

Sponsored by Representative Charisse Millett of Anchorage, HB 44 requires every schoolboard to implement a mandatory training program so school employees can recognize warning signs of child sexual abuse, and teach students to recognize when they are being abused. This portion of the bill is commonly referred to as "Erin's Law," which has now been passed in 26 states across the nation.

A second notable part of the bill is "Bree's Law," which requires school districts to provide age-appropriate information to students in grades 7-12 about teen dating violence, awareness, prevention, and healthy relationships. This portion of the bill is named in honor of Breanna Moore, an Anchorage teen who police say was killed last year at the hands of an abusive boyfriend.

Governor Walker applauds the efforts of Representative Millett, along with Representative Geran Tarr, Senator Lesil McGuire, Senator Berta Gardner and Senator Peter Micciche in passing this critical piece of legislation.

"These legislators were tremendous supporters of the Alaska Safe Children's Act, and played a valuable role in ensuring the bill's passage," Governor Walker said. "I thank each of them for their tireless work to protect Alaska's children, and for shepherding HB 44 through the Legislature."

The Alaska Safe Children's Task Force, which was established through HB 44, will work over the next year to provide recommendations for a model curriculum on assault prevention topics identified in the legislation.

###